

VZCZCXRO8447
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHRY #0027/01 0100556
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 100556Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2036
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000027

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: GUINEA CALM, BUT ANXIOUS AS STRIKE DEADLINE LOOMS

REF: A. CONAKRY 0013

[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0010

[1](#)C. CONAKRY 0019

[1](#)D. CARTER-DOUGHERTY EMAILS

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY. Embassy LES conversations with contacts throughout Guinea suggest that there is a general air of calm in most urban centers, layered over anxiety and worry as citizens wait to see whether the unions will resume a nationwide strike January 10 as planned (reftel A). The capital has also been relatively quiet with a handful of generally peaceful demonstrations over the past few days. Government contacts in some key cities report that they have been working with citizens in order to deter violence. Guineans are uncertain about what tomorrow may bring, but generally seem to think that January 10 will be relatively quiet. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) After some heated demonstrations on January 4 (reftel B), which resulted in the death of a 32 year old student, Conakry has been relatively calm. There have been a handful of small, generally peaceful demonstrations over the last few days, which were effectively controlled by police forces. On January 8 at the People,s Palace, a number of young people reportedly supporting the ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) hurled insults at union members, but were non-violent. The university campuses have been quiet. However, a police contact told RSO LES that the decapitated body of a Red Beret (Presidential Guard) had been found early in the morning January 9 in the Ratoma area of Conakry.

[1](#)3. (U) Middle Guinea, which is dominated by the Peuhl ethnic group, saw significant violence in its two urban centers of Mamou and Labe during the civil unrest last year. Contacts in both cities reported small, peaceful student demonstrations in Labe on January 7 and in Mamou on January 8, allegedly protesting the dismissal of Communications Minister Justin Morel Jr. (reftel C). The prefect of Mamou told POL LES that he met with civil society, youth groups, unions, and the Patronat on January 6 in order to diffuse potential violence. He reportedly encouraged the Patronat to protect their own business interests and told the unions that they should make every effort to avoid violence. Mamou youth associations reportedly told the prefect that they were going door to door in Petel, a notoriously politically hot, neighborhood of Mamou, encouraging young people to stay home and maintain the peace.

[1](#)4. (U) A contact in Pita, another town in Middle Guinea, told LES that there was a peaceful student demonstration on January 8. Students reportedly carried signs and called out Long live change, long live Justin Morel., Contact also said that although there was no violence, schools and stores were closed on January 8.

[1](#)5. (U) In Upper Guinea, which is predominantly Malinke,

Kankan also saw significant violence in early 2007. According to Embassy contacts, there were some demonstrations and looting in Kankan on January 8, but that peace and order were quickly restored. The Governor of Kankan, one of the few Kouyate appointments with extensive ties to the ruling PUP, told LES that he is working closely with civil society and unions in order to avoid violence. During a November Poloff visit to Kankan, the Governor said that Kankan is always hot, and people are quick to react violently.

¶16. (U) Another hotbed of trouble in early 2007 was N'Zerekore, which is located in Guinea's Forest Region. Contacts there, including the Governor, report that the situation is calm and the city quiet. Another contact told LES that people are generally worried, but there have been no civil disturbances.

¶17. (U) The Governor of Boke, which is located in Lower Guinea (ethnically Soussou) told USAID LES on January 8 that things are generally quiet. The Governor reportedly said that he was surprised the unions are striking since it could undermine the very government (Kouyate) they are trying to support. The Governor told LES that he was confident that the strike will not take place.

COMMENT

¶18. (U) Citizens seem to be anxious because there is such a high degree of uncertainty within the current political context. There is a wide range of actors with a wide range of possible reactions and/or political strategies. Given waning support for the nationwide labor strike set to resume

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January 10, many contacts seem to be hoping that it will be a non event. END COMMENT.
CARTER